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ABSTRACT

The residential environment which universities establish should reinforce the values which are advocated by institutional goals and mission statements. It follows that students who live in residence should feel a sense of self-worth and self-efficacy relative to these goals and values. This study investigated the relationship between specific institutionally goal-oriented behaviors and values and student self-esteem and self-efficacy. College student subjects (N=70) living in the United States and abroad completed one measure of self-efficacy and two measures of self-esteem. Preliminary analyses of self-esteem and self-efficacy data from students in residence in the United States and Europe revealed few significant location effects. Thus, data sets were combined in order to investigate time and gender effects of residency living on self-esteem and self-efficacy related to behaviors, roles, and values based on institutional goals. The assumption is that student perceptions of their self-feelings provide an index of the stability of their self-esteem. On most of the measures students in this study reported lower post-experience levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy. This supports the relationship of life change events to lowered self-esteem. A positive interpretation suggests that this is an indication of maturation and increasing self-understanding and self-reflection, of greater insight into the complexities of individual and social development, and more realistic evaluation of one's present capabilities and attitudes. (LLL)

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The Impact of Residential Hall Living on Student Self-Esteem and Self-Efficacy

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Abstract

The residential environment which universities establish should reinforce the values which are advocated by institutional goals and mission statements. It follows that students who live in residence should feel a sense of self-worth and self-efficacy relative to these goals and values. This study investigated the relationship between specific institutionally goal-oriented behaviors and values and student self-esteem and -efficacy. Because location effects were minimal, students studying abroad and at home constituted a single sample. The focus of the study was on time and gender effects of residence living on self-esteem and -efficacy. Post-experience students felt less positive about themselves as they juggled multiple roles: student, citizen, friend, worker, and family member. Findings which appear to be negative, since they indicate lowered feelings of worthiness and competence, can be viewed as indicators of developing maturity, self-reflection, and realistic evaluation.

The Impact of Residential Hall Living on Student Self-Esteem and Self-Efficacy

Introduction

Whether they live in residence, off campus, or at home the university experience impacts on students. Chickering's 1971 study revealed that increased sophistication, especially for women, was associated with informal activities of a cultural nature pursued together. Based on a series of studies he concluded that commuters and residents begin their college careers with an unequal start which greatly favors the residents, and this gap widens during the college years. "The commuters fall short of the kinds of learning and personal development typically desired by the institution they attend." (Chickering & Kuper, 1971: 84). Brasell and Murell (1982) used a Social Values Scale to examine changes in students pre- and post-residence hall living. They found that the residence hall environment provided by this denominational institution helped to preserve attitudes which students brought with them and to reinforce home and church influences. They recommended that universities evaluate the relationships between environment and values, which are advocated by institutional goals and mission statements.

Chickering's research (1967-1981) has focused on the impact

of college residence on student development. He found that close associations and living together provide a setting for the freeing of interpersonal relationships. The group becomes an important reference and an anchor. In turn, the individual's behavior influences the group. Propinquity facilitates friendships based on values and interests and provides a wide range of persons to exchange ideas with. This leads to increased tolerance for a wide range of different kinds of persons. Chickering (1967) reviews college housing units as "subcultures" which influence students. In examining the effect of residency living on student development he notes that in developing a personal value system, one sets standards by which to appraise him/herself and his/her own behavior, with self-esteem varying as a consequence of the appraisal (1967: 182). He points out that the extent to which a particular group assumes importance for an individual depends upon the extent to which ties to others: family, friends, social structures has been disrupted. Secondly, to influence individuals, the group must enable each member to fulfill his/her social or material needs, to realize his/her immediate purposes and proceed toward long-range goals.

THE STUDY

This report is part of a larger study which investigated the impact of living abroad on students studying abroad. Results of the study suggest that location is not as powerful an

influence on students' self-perceptions related to institutional goals as had been expected. In fact some scores of the American students in residence were higher than were those of the students abroad, and more significant differences emerged when the two groups were combined. Gender and pre- post-test analyses reveal significant differences for students in residence discounting location. The measures of self-efficacy and self-esteem which are directly related to the university's institutional goals were developed specifically for this study.

Background

The university referred to in this study is a private public-service institution dedicated to higher education and health care with a tradition that emphasizes the development of the individual student, including social, moral and spiritual growth within the Judeo-Christian framework. The objectives of this institution include preparing men and women who are intellectually mature and whose lives express the values which they embrace. These institutional goals together with those that are specific to the university's liberal arts program abroad provided the parameters and dimensions for this study. In addition, standard expectations for student accomplishments in residence at home and abroad were included. The institutional goals and objectives provided the conceptual basis and the focus. Developmental skills and competencies clustered into general

categories: autonomy, communication, empathy and understanding, independence and initiative, physical appearance and abilities, practical management, problem solving, roles, self-development, social and interpersonal values, work and school performance.

The desired developmental outcomes are related closely to self-esteem and self-efficacy. Both are crucial for successful and productive living. Self-esteem is one's feeling of worthwhileness based on areas of competence in behaviors which one personally values. Self-efficacy can be measured in terms of level of competence and strength of confidences in ability to accomplish tasks.

Subjects and Data Collection

Questionnaires with cover letters were mailed in the registration packet to all applicants to the foreign study program (N = 190). One hundred and eight of them returned completed forms, 39 males and 69 females. Of these, 74 were juniors, 20 were seniors and 14 were sophomores. Post-experience retest data were collected by the researchers in the classrooms at the end of the first term for those who were returning home (N = 45) and at the end of the academic year for those who remained for the full time (N = 25). These 70 students, 65% of the entering experimental group, constituted the sample for data analysis (90% of the seniors, 66% of the juniors and 2% of the

sophomores; 75% of the males, 60% of the females).

From the official list of all students living in residence on the university's American campus similar subjects (year and gender) were identified. Proportional sub-samples were randomly selected to constitute the initial American sample (N = 607). During the third week of school, questionnaires were delivered to these students' mailboxes. Twelve percent (N = 71) of the sample, 16 males and 55 females returned completed questionnaires. The post-test was distributed to these students at the end of the school year. The return rate was 26.76% (7 males and 12 females).

Instrumentation

Subjects completed one measure of self-efficacy and two measures of self-esteem. These instruments were developed specifically for this study: The Student Survival Self-Efficacy Measure (SSS-EM), the Self-Knowledge Scale (S-KS), and the Self-Feelings Scale (S-FS).

The Student Survival Self-Efficacy Measure (SSS-EM)

The Student Survival Self-Efficacy Measure (SSS-EM), developed for the present study and reported elsewhere (in process), asks subjects to rate their ability to perform specific

accomplishments which reflect the goals of the program, and are critical to success in it. These "survival requirements" (SR) focus on (1) social and interpersonal relationships (2) communication (3) empathy and understanding (4) independence and initiative (5) problem solving (6) self-discipline and a sense of responsibility (7) practical management. Procedures used by Betz and Hackett (1981) and Lent et al. (1986) were followed. Self-efficacy was assessed by asking students to indicate whether they could successfully accomplish the specified tasks relating to these survival requirements. Level of self-efficacy scores are obtained by summing the number of accomplishments subjects believe they can perform. Strength of self-efficacy is assessed by having subjects estimate their degree of confidence in their ability to do the specified tasks. Strength (or confidence) is indicated on a 10-point scale ranging from "completely unsure" (1) to "completely sure" (10). Strength scores for each subject are calculated by dividing the summed strength estimates by 25, the total number of items. Scores for each of the seven survival requirement categories are obtained similarly. Coefficient alpha was used to estimate internal consistency reliability for the 25 items (.88) with a range from .69 to .81 in the seven categories. Only strength of self-efficacy was used in this study because it effectively subsumes information obtained in the level measure.

The Self-Knowledge Scale (S-KS)

The Self-Knowledge Scale was used as an index of self-attitude relative to four specific categories (1) individual and personal characteristics (2) physical appearance and abilities (3) social and interpersonal skills (4) vocational, work and school performance. The S-KS contains 25 statements about the self that subjects respond to on a four-point scale, yielding a favorable-to-unfavorable dimension of attitude toward the self. Higher scores indicate more favorable self-attitudes. The coefficient alpha value for this scale was .86 with sub-scale values ranging from .61 to .68.

The Self-Feelings Scale (S-FS)

The Self-Feelings Scale (Figure III), served as an index of self-esteem. This measure contains 20 statements about the self as an (1) autonomous (2) interacting individual directed by a system of (3) values and functioning in multiple (4) roles. Statements reflect the concepts underlying the goals of the university program which are also the basis of the previously described SSS-EM. Subjects respond to these self-statements relative to six feeling dimensions: (1) very good (2) good enough (3) very bad (4) doesn't matter to me (5) I'd like to improve or feel differently (6) I never thought about it. This response mode allows subjects to indicate a range of feelings more reflective of the impact of esteem than do the "agree-disagree" and "like me-not like me" responses customarily used in measures

of self-esteem. Self-statements which the individual has not thought about or which don't matter will not impact on feelings of worth. Coefficient alpha was used to estimate internal consistency reliability for the 20 items: .88 for the scale as a whole with a range of .63 to .69 for the four sub-scales: autonomy, interaction, roles, values.

For the purpose of this study, dimensions one and two ("very good" and "good enough") were combined as were dimensions four and six ("doesn't matter to me;" and "I never thought about it"). This resulted in four response categories used for purposes of analysis and discussion (1) positive (2) improve (3) neutral (4) negative.

Results

To determine if living in residence irrespective of location made a difference in students' feelings of self-esteem and self-efficacy, repeated measures factorial analyses of variance was applied to the total and sub-scale scores from the three instruments used in the study. The factors investigated were gender (male, female), and the repeated factors of time (pre/post). Statistically significant results were investigated using Tukey's studentized range statistics.

Of all the possible interaction effects, statistically

significant differences were found only for two sub-scales of the Self-Feelings Scale: "interaction" and "roles". When the "interaction" sub-scale was the dependent variable, statistically significant differences were found for gender ($p = .031$). Consequently, the interaction and main effects were investigated using Tukey's aposteriori procedure.

The results showed a statistically larger mean ($p = .001$) for total pre and post U.S.A. and Europe males (7.14) than for their female counterparts (6.89). Repeated measures analyses of variance for the combined locations "role" sub-scale scores also showed a statistically significant difference in time ($p = .001$). No other significant main effects or interactions were found. The investigation of the means showed that the pre-test mean was 7.64 while the post-test mean was 6.26, significantly smaller than the pre-test mean (Table 1).

Table 1 about here

Analyses of the scores on the Student Survival Self-Efficacy Measure revealed no gender or time differences on total scale scores or on sub-scale scores, "empathy and understanding" and "self-discipline and responsibility". When responses to specific categories or sub-scales were analyzed for all students, locations combined (Table 2), the mean of the pre-test scores

(18.85) was significantly higher than that of the post-test scores (17.89) on "independence and initiative" (p= .027); also for "practical management", pre $\bar{x}$ = 20.98, post $\bar{x}$ = 9.55 (p = .002); "problem solving" pre $\bar{x}$ = 17.24, post $\bar{x}$ = 16.06 (p = .004). "Gender" influences were found with females scoring significantly higher ($\bar{x}$ = 26.99) than males ($\bar{x}$ = 25.24) on "communication" (p = .016); "social and interpersonal", pre $\bar{x}$ = 10.41, post $\bar{x}$ = 9.61 (p = .015); "practical management", pre $\bar{x}$ = 21.02, post $\bar{x}$ = 19.53 (p = .0036).

Table 2 about here

The focus of the Self-Feelings Scale was on esteem. Analyses of the "autonomy" and "values" sub-scales data revealed no gender or time differences. The pre-test, "roles" sub-scale means for combined samples (7.72) were significantly higher (p = .001) than were those at post-testing (6.73). For the "interaction" sub-scale, males scored higher than did females ($\bar{x}$ = 7.27 compared to $\bar{x}$ = 6.68; p = .0306).

Significant differences in responses to the Self-Knowledge Scale were found in three of the sub-scales. Gender differences were evidenced with males scoring higher ($\bar{x}$ = 8.84) than females ($\bar{x}$ = 8.49) on "social and interpersonal skills" (p = .028); "vocational and school performance", ($\bar{x}$ = 8.22, $\bar{x}$ = 7.84;

pre-test scores ($\bar{x}$ = 8.53) were higher (p = .000) than were post-test scores ($\bar{x}$ = 7.99). When all scores on the Self-Knowledge Scale were combined males ($\bar{x}$ = 41.66) scored significantly higher (p = .048) than did females ($\bar{x}$ = 40.99).

Discussion

The five dimensions on the "interaction" sub-scale of the Self-Feelings Scale were: male-female, social, empathic and caring, other's reactions, and communication (items 6, 10, 13, 18, 20). The fact that males felt better about themselves in these respects may reflect higher self-expectations on the part of the females. Males' higher scores on two areas on the Self-Knowledge Scale, "social skills and abilities", and "academic competency" may be influenced by sex-role socialization. Away from home, females may feel less secure and expect males to take the initiative. Also, they may be less confident of their ability to compete academically and they many be more concerned with other aspects of residence living which assume priority over academic progress.

Marron and Kayson (1984) found that men had higher self-esteem than women. Also, students in residence reported more life-change events and lower self-esteem than those who did not live in residence. They concluded that experiencing changes in

The five roles on the Self-Feelings sub-scales were student, citizen, family member, friend and worker (items 1 - 5). When combined student scores were examined, students reported less positive feelings about their roles after the university experience than before, whether they have lived in the U.S.A. or abroad. Perhaps greater insight into the requirements of these roles, or the fact that energy must be more focused on specific roles could account for these findings.

This explanation might also be pertinent to the findings on the Self-Efficacy sub-scales, "independence and initiative, problem solving, and practical management." Dealing with the daily problems of living away from home entails a more realistic self-evaluation of one's competence. Similarly, the "general" sub-scale of the Self-Knowledge Scale included concepts of fairness, morality and citizenship which require reflection and reexamination by the young adult, especially in a university setting. Such reflection results in questioning and uncertainty. Thus, lower mean scores after time spent on either campus could be interpreted positively as a reflection of developmental progress.

The fact that females scored significantly higher than males on the "communication" and "social and interpersonal" sub-scales of the Self-Efficacy Measure is puzzling given the reverse

finding on the "social skills" of the Self-Knowledge Scale items. The former measure requires an evaluation of one's confidence or "strength" while the latter merely asks for agreement or disagreement. Females may be more confident when pressed to indicate this and the Self-Efficacy Measure may be the more powerful instrument. Also, since it was designed specifically for this study and pre-tested on a group similar to the students in this study, items and wording may be more relevant. There is a great deal of overlap in the two instruments and in future research refinement of the instrumentation may be warranted. That females scored higher than males in the "practical management" category might be expected. Usually they have had more practice at laundry, shopping, food preparation and housekeeping chores.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Preliminary analyses of self-esteem and self-efficacy data from students in residence in America and Europe revealed few significant location effects. Thus, data sets were combined in order to investigate time (pre and post) and gender effects of residency living on self-esteem and self-efficacy related to behaviors, roles and values based on institutional goals. The assumption is that student perceptions of their self-feelings provide an index of the stability of their self-esteem. On most of the measures students in this study reported lower post-

experience levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy. This supports the relationship of life change events to lowered self-esteem. A positive interpretation suggests that this is an indication of maturation and increasing self-understanding and self-reflection, of greater insight into the complexities of individual and social development, and more realistic evaluation of one's present capabilities and attitudes.

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Table 1

Mean Scores for the Self-Feelings "Interaction" Sub-Scale

		Mean		
Location	N	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Grand
America	n = 71	7.7*	n = 19 7.7	7.7**
Europe	n = 108	7.2*	n = 70 6.7	7.0**

Gender	N	Mean
M	55	7.14**
F	124	6.89**

* Denotes statistically significant differences (α = .01) for Tukey's Procedure

** Denotes statistically significant differences (α = .031) for the repeated measures ANOVA

Table 2

Means for Scales and Sub-Scales for Gender and Time

Scale & Sub-Scale	Mean		Significance Level
Gender:	Male	Female	
Self-Knowledge Scale			
Total Scale	41.66	40.99	p = .048
Academic Performance	8.22	7.84	p = .0132
Social & Interpersonal Skills	8.84	8.49	p = .028
Self-Feelings Scale			
Interaction	7.27	6.68	p = .0306
Self-Efficacy Measure			
Practical Management	19.53	21.02	p = .0036
Social-Interpersonal	9.61	10.41	p = .015
Communication	25.24	26.99	p = .016
Time:	Pre	Post	
Self-Knowledge Scale			
General	8.53	7.99	p = .000

Self-Feelings Scale			
Roles	7.64	6.26	p = .001
Self-Efficacy Measure			
Independence & Initiative	18.85	17.89	p = .027
Practical Management	20.98	19.55	p = .002
Problem Solving	17.24	16.06	p = .004